



City of Malibu News

23815 Stuart Ranch Road • Malibu, California • 90265-4861
Phone (310) 456-2489 • Fax (310) 456-3356 • www.ci.malibu.ca.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Katie Lichtig
(310) 456-2489 ext. 226
klichtig@ci.malibu.ca.us

City Council Approves Steps in the Ongoing Efforts to Clean Malibu Creek, Malibu Lagoon and Surfrider Beach

City and Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission work together to develop Risk Assessment Study for wastewater treatment in environmental area of Civic Center

Malibu, California (September 20, 2004) – The Malibu City Council unanimously approved the Risk Assessment of Decentralized Wastewater Management in High Priority Areas in the City of Malibu last Monday night. This study (funded and monitored by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission) evaluated the interrelationships between Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS), commonly referred to as septic systems, and groundwater. More specifically, the Risk Assessment analyzed the potential for bacteria and nitrogen from treated effluent emanating from OWTS to travel to Malibu Creek, Malibu Lagoon and the surf zone within the Civic Center area of Malibu. The study utilized available data, 84 sampling wells, numerous sampling events and analysis to produce a fact-based, conceptual model to provide an information tool to evaluate the impacts of OWTS on groundwater quality and to delineate the directions of groundwater flows within the study area.

The study, conducted by Stone Environmental of Vermont and Questa Engineering of Santa Barbara, determined which direction the groundwater is flowing (either towards Malibu Creek and Lagoon or the surf zone). The study determined that, depending on the location of the OWTS, there are some limited areas in the Civic Center area that are contributing bacteria and/or nitrogen to either the Malibu Creek and Lagoon or the surf zone. Additionally, the study modeled groundwater movement to determine the time of travel for bacteria and nitrogen to Malibu Creek, Malibu Lagoon and the surf zone. Some areas had times of travel as short as six months and as long as 50 years.

The study also presented action items to achieve reduction in the amount of bacteria and/or nitrogen to the impacted water body. There was a particular emphasis on addressing areas where the bacteria or nitrogen can reach the impacted water body in 6 months or less. The action items ranged from initiating point of sale inspections to requiring inspection for any OWTS in a zone that has a time of travel of six months or less to evaluating a clustered wastewater collection, treatment, disinfection and dispersal system to requiring the removal of nitrogen in the contributing area or a combination of the action items.

Malibu Mayor Sharon Barovsky expressed satisfaction with the study, stating, “This study provides the community with facts which will chart the future regarding OWTS in the Civic Center. We can now pursue fact-based, outcome-driven policies regarding wastewater treatment in the Civic Center. This report and the action items go a long way to help us demystify this topic.” Mayor Barovsky said she is optimistic that “...the City will move expeditiously to implement the actions items that will have the most positive impact on water quality in the Civic Center area. I look forward to working with our partners to achieve this objective.”

The study was praised by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, the primary partner in this multi-year effort. “I commend the City of Malibu for working to improve Malibu Creek, Malibu Lagoon and Surfrider Beach,” said Jack Weiss, Los Angeles City Councilman and Chair of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission. Councilman Weiss went on to say, “Protecting and restoring the Malibu Creek watershed has long been one of the Commission’s top priorities, and we are proud to have supported this comprehensive study. Its results will lead to improved water quality in the Creek and the Bay.”

The conclusion of the study brought a positive response from the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. LARWQCB Chairwoman Fran Diamond said, “The City of Malibu has been working diligently to gather information so that they can continue their efforts to improve water quality in the Civic Center area. I have no doubts that they will take the next steps with all due diligence.” Chairwoman Diamond went on to add, “The Regional Board supports the City in its efforts to find sound environmental solutions in order to meet the highest environmental standard. It appears that this study will help them protect and enhance the water quality in and around the Civic Center. This is a very positive step in the right direction.”

The City of Malibu was incorporated on March 28, 1991. Located in Northwest Los Angeles County, the City has 21 miles of coastline along the Pacific Ocean and a population of 12,575.

###